

### REMARKS

In response to the Office Action of July 31, 2001, Applicants are appealing the rejection of pending claims 46-66. Claims 1-45 have been previously cancelled. This amendment (after final rejection) is being separately filed with an appeal brief and is believed to conform with the requirements of 37 CFR 1.116.

The amendment is being submitted to overcome the rejections in the Final Office Action of July 31, 2001, namely, (1) the rejection under 35 USC 112, first paragraph, as to Claims 48-50 and 58-60 and (2) the rejection under 35 USC 112, second paragraph, as to Claims 48-65.

As to the rejection of Claims 48-50 and 58-60 under 35 USC §112, first paragraph, the Examiner contended that is not clear how applicants' claimed composite sheet membrane can be comprised of both a "flat sheet" and a "contoured", "rippled", and "pleated" sheet.

As to the rejection of Claims 46-65 under 35 USC §112, record paragraph, the Examiner contended that : (a) the use of the word "near" in independent claim 46 and dependent Claim 61 was being too broad; (b) the recitation of "said skin" in Claim 61 lacked antecedent basis and (c) Claims 48-50 and 58-60 were vague and confusing, "because it is confusing as to how the membrane can includes both a 'flat' sheet and a 'contoured', 'rippled', or 'pleated' sheet."

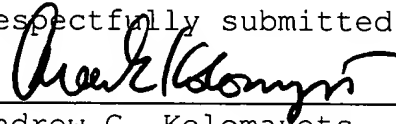
By this Amendment and without acquiescing in the correctness of the Examiner's rejection, Applicants have amended claim 46 by deleting the reference to a "flat sheet" polymeric support. Applicants submit that the proposed amendment eliminates any confusion as to how the sheet membrane can comprise both a "flat" sheet and an otherwise contoured sheet.

Regarding the recitation of the term "near" in Claims 46 and 56, since Claim 56 does not recite the term "near", Applicants understand the Examiner's rejection to be directed at Claim 61, rather than Claim 56. In any event, Applicants have amended Claims 46 and 61, which now recite, in part, that "less of said particulate is disposed at said outer surface than is disposed further in the interior of said membrane". Support for this amendment may be found at page 16, lines 29-36 of the specification, where it is stated that "more of the particles may be distributed within the inner portions of the membrane than at or near the outer surfaces, (as generally shown, for example, in Figs. 3 and 4)."

The Examiner correctly rejected Claim 61 for lack of antecedent support for the limitation "said skin". Accordingly, Applicants have further amended Claim 61 to recite "wherein the outer surface of said membrane has a porous and selectively permeable skin". It is believed that this amendment addresses the Examiner's rejection.

For the reasons set forth above, applicants respectfully submit that the rejections of Claims 46-65 under 35 USC §112, first and record paragraphs have been fully addressed and traversed. This amendment incorporates only formal matters and does not necessitate any further examination by the Examiner. Accordingly, entry of the above amendment is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

Claim 46 has been amended as follows:

46. (Amended) A flexible, composite sheet membrane comprising:

a ~~flat sheet~~ polymeric support sheet, said support having a first side and a second side, wherein each of said first and second sides comprises a coating of a non-fiberized polymeric material, said material comprising a particulate blended with a polymer, said particulate being substantially physically immobilized by said polymer,

each of said sides having a coating of said material substantially equal in thickness and wherein the outer surface of said membrane has a porous and selectively permeable skin, and wherein less of said particulate is disposed at ~~near~~ said ~~skin~~ outer surface than is disposed further in the interior of said membrane.

56. (Amended) A flexible, composite sheet membrane comprising:

a ~~flat sheet~~ polymeric support, said support comprising a first side and a second side,

at least one of said first or second sides comprising a first coating of a particulate blended with a polymer, said particulate being substantially physically immobilized by said polymer, and a second coating of a hydrophilizing agent.

61. (Amended) The membrane of Claim 56 wherein the outer surface of said membrane has a porous and selectively permeable skin, and wherein less of said particulate is disposed at ~~near~~ said ~~skin~~ outer surface than is disposed further in the interior of said